

Discovery and Excavation in Scotland

Updated on 15/06/2007

LOCAL AUTHORITY:	Orkney Islands
PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:	Stones of Stenness
PROJECT CODE:	HSCO-90285-2016-01
PARISH:	Stenness
NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:	Andrew Hollinrake
NAME OF ORGANISATION:	Kirkdale Archaeology
TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:	Watching brief
NMRS NO(S):	HY31SW 2
SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):	Henge, Stone circle
SIGNIFICANT FINDS:	
NGR (2 letters, 8 or 10 figures)	HY 3066 1244 and HY 3067 1256
START DATE (this season)	24 February 2016
END DATE (this season)	24 February 2016
PREVIOUS WORK (incl. <i>DES</i> ref.)	
MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION: (May include information from other fields)	<p>A watching brief was maintained during the excavation of two small trenches to allow the installation of two new access gates.</p> <p>One trench was located towards the southern corner of the field, just north-west of the livestock gate where the extant visitor access 'kissing gate' and nearby strainer post were to be removed (HY 3066 1244). All the material removed was either part of the concrete foundation of the existing strainer post and gate, or material previously disturbed and re-deposited.</p> <p>The second trench was located at the far northern corner of the field, where a stile over the fence giving access to the path to Barnhouse Village was to be replaced with a gate (HY 3067 1256). A surface of compact, grey-brown clay with abundant large, angular stone fragments was encountered at a maximum depth of 0.45m. It was left unexcavated, and most likely represents either entirely natural deposits or remnants of a post-medieval stone dyke.</p>
PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:	
CAPTION(S) FOR ILLUSTRS:	
SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:	Historic Environment Scotland
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ARCHIVE LOCATION (intended/deposited)	Archive to be deposited with Historic Environment Scotland

**HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SCOTLAND
PROPERTIES IN CARE
MINOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORKS 2015/2016**

Stones of Stenness • Archaeological Recording • February 2016

HS PIC Index Number: 90285

SITE: Stones of Stenness, Mainland, Orkney Isles.

N.G.R.: HY 3066 1244 and HY 3067 1256.

DESCRIPTION: Archaeological watching brief during the digging of two trenches to emplace new gates.

PROJECT CODE: HSCO-90285-2016-01

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INTRODUCTION

Under the terms of its PIC call-off contract with Historic Environment Scotland, Kirkdale Archaeology was asked to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the excavation of two trenches to allow the installation of new access gates, at the north and south corners of the area within which the Stones of Stenness, Mainland, Orkney (Fig. 1) are situated.

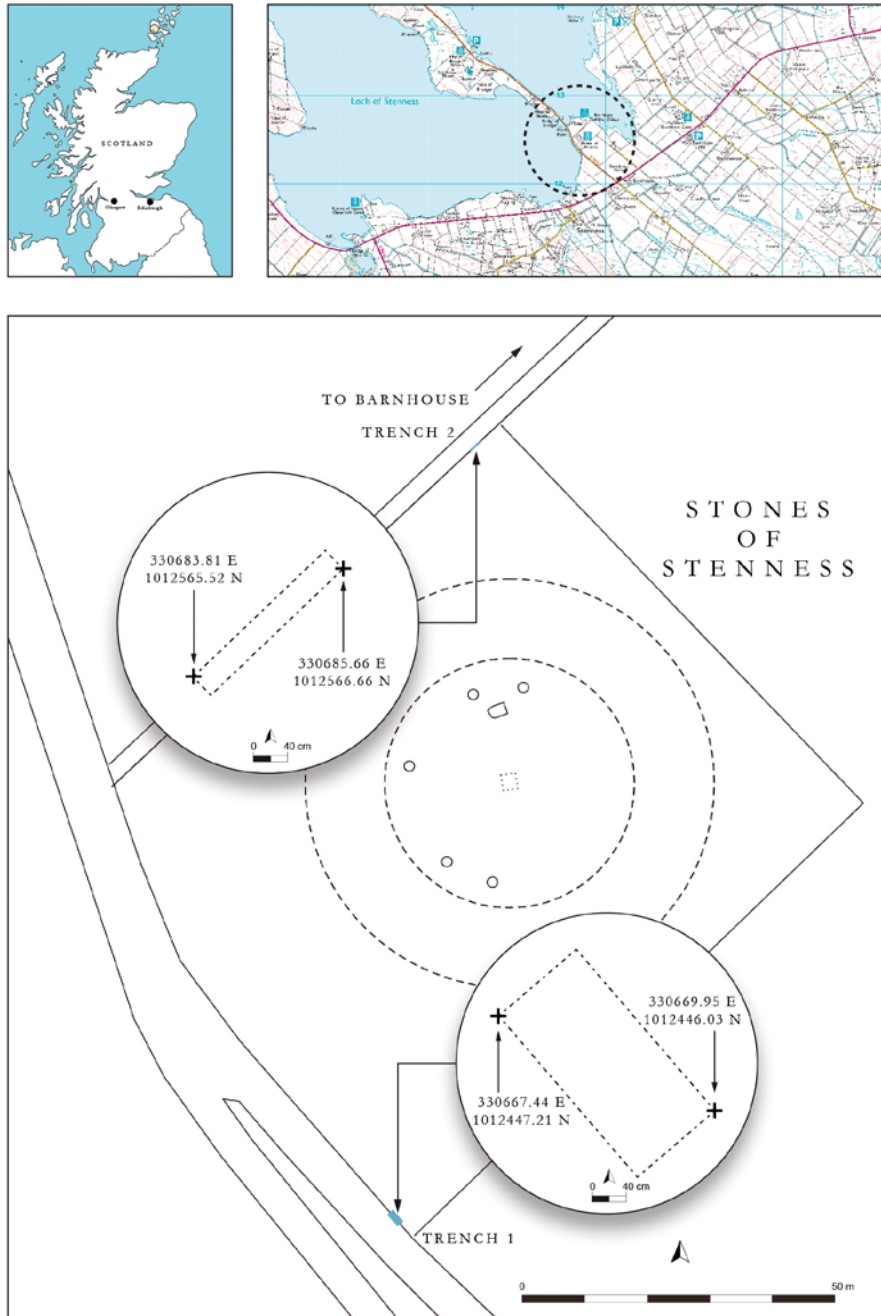


Figure 1: Plan showing the location of the two trenches.

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The work was carried out on 24th February, 2016.

DESCRIPTION

Trench 1

This was located towards the southern corner of the field, just north-west of the livestock gate where the extant visitor access 'kissing gate' and nearby strainer post were to be removed. All the material removed was either part of the concrete foundation of the existing strainer post and gate, or material previously disturbed and re-deposited. The area excavated measured $\approx 2.5\text{m}$ NW/SE by 1.2m NE/SW. In general the trench was excavated to a depth of 0.1m onto a clear gravel surface. Within this a $\approx 0.50\text{m}$ wide and 0.35m deep channel was dug, with a deeper, wider area at its north-western end, $\approx 0.8\text{m}$ wide with a maximum depth of 0.8m . The latter area did not extend beyond the trench created by the concrete foundations of the removed strainer post, and as such, no undisturbed material was affected.



Plate 1: Trench 1, post-excitation.

Trench 2

Trench 2 was located at the far northern corner of the field, where a stile over the fence giving access to the path to Barnhouse Village was to be replaced with a gate. An exploratory 'prod' of the turf with a spade revealed a lot of stone near the surface, in the originally intended location, so the area excavated was moved a little to the south-west where no stone was detected. A trench measuring 2.15m NE/SW was opened, with a width of 0.3m NW/SE. The removal of 0.1m of turf and topsoil, **201**, revealed **202**, a fairly compact layer of mid-to-dark greyish brown, silty, clay, 0.15m – 0.18m thick, with occasional small, angular, sandstone fragments. Beneath this was **203**, a 0.15m – 0.18m thick layer of material almost identical in composition to **202**, although a little lighter in colour, slightly stonier and with a few charcoal flecks. The boundary between **202** and **203** was not clearly defined. The removal of **203** revealed **204**, a compact, grey-brown clay with abundant large, angular stone fragments. The surface of this deposit was encountered at a maximum depth of 0.45m.



Plate 2: Trench 2, post-excitation.

CONCLUSIONS

The deposits seen in Trench 1 were clearly a mixture of surfacing material and recently re-deposited soil.

The stones near the surface of the location in which Trench 2 was originally to be excavated were most likely the remnants of a post-medieval stone dyke. The upper soil deposit **202** most likely represents improved, well-manured plough soil, over a potentially much older soil horizon, **203**, slightly lighter in colour. Context **204** was clearly a natural deposit, and although it was not easy to distinguish within such a narrow trench, the stone visible had the appearance of a bedrock outcrop.

LIST OF CONTEXTS

No.	Description
201	0.1m of turf and dark brown topsoil.
202	Fairly compact, mid-to-dark greyish/brown, silty, clay, 0.15m – 0.18m thick, with occasional small, angular, sandstone fragments.
203	Fairly compact, mid-greyish/brown, silty, clay, 0.15m – 0.18m thick, with occasional small, angular, sandstone fragments and charcoal flecks.
204	Compact, grey/brown clay with abundant large, angular stone fragments. Natural clay till and/or igneous dyke.

LIST OF DRAWINGS

No.	Type	Description	Scale
1	Plan	Location.	1:50

LIST OF DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHS

No.	Description	From	Date
1	Trench 1 - surface gravel being removed.	E	24/02/2016
2	Trench 1 - excavation in progress.	SW	24/02/2016
3	Trench 1 - post-excavation.	SE	24/02/2016
4	Trench 2 - after turf/topsoil 201 removed.	NE	24/02/2016
5	Trench 2 - post-excavation.	SE	24/02/2016
6	Trench 2 - post-excavation.	NE	24/02/2016